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THE NEW ALBEDO

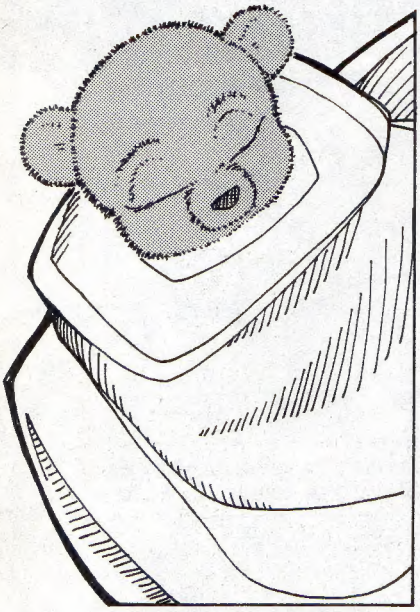
SD 198-02-28 EDF Remote Operations Base, Ish Tako

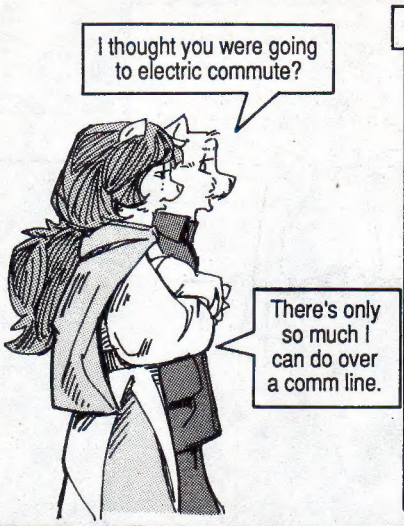
Thank you again, doctor, for everything.

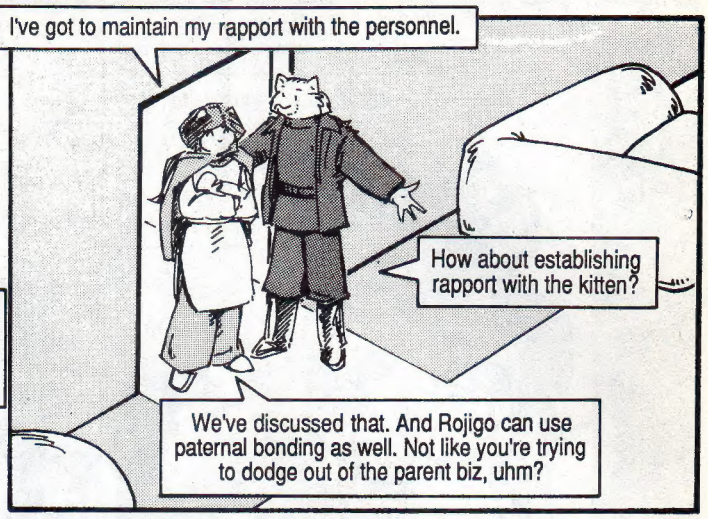
You take care of yourself.

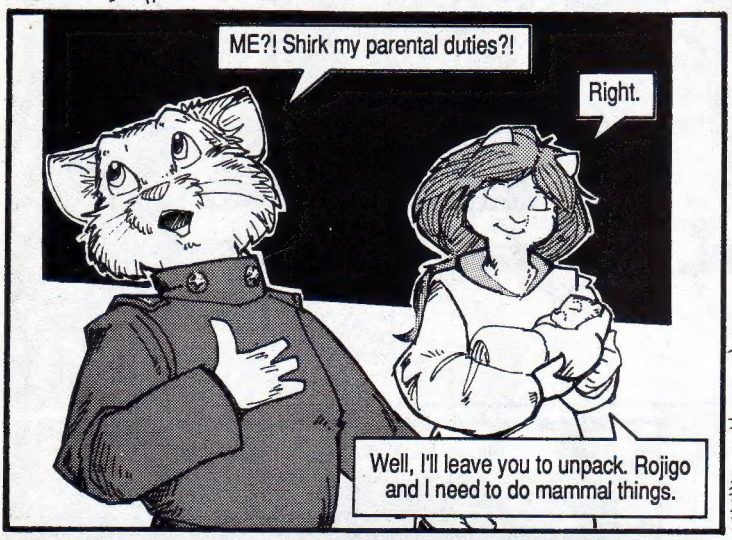
I'll see to that.

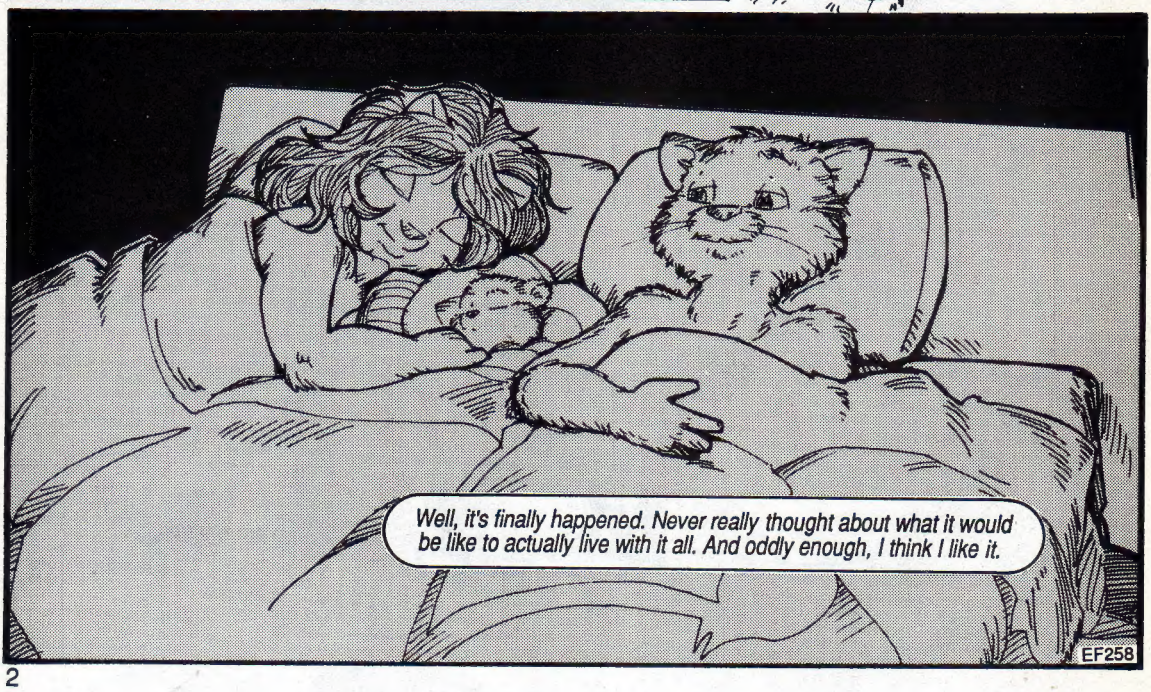
While we'll keep a monitor on him for another few weeks, I don't expect any problems.

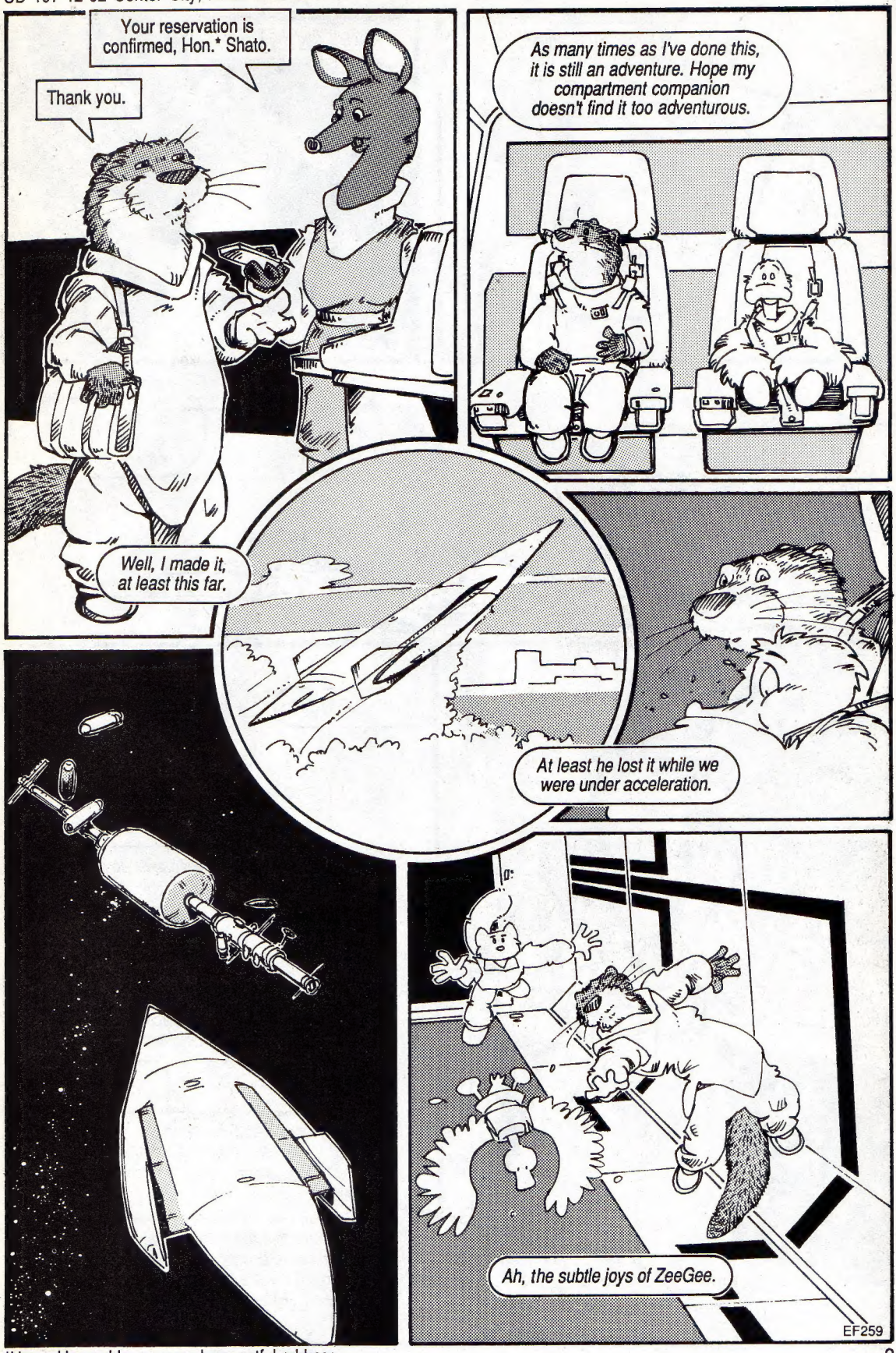



I thought you were going to electric commute?
There's only so much I can do over a comm line.

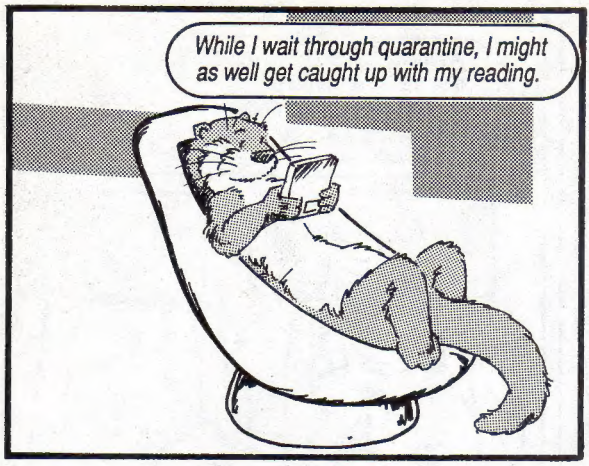

I've got to maintain my rapport with the personnel.
How about establishing rapport with the kitten?
We've discussed that. And Rojigo can use paternal bonding as well. Not like you're trying to dodge out of the parent biz, uhm?

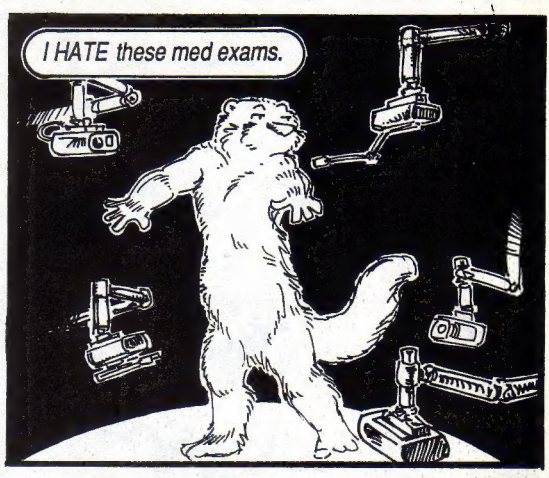

ME?! Shirk my parental duties?!
Right.
Well, I'll leave you to unpack. Rojigo and I need to do mammal things.

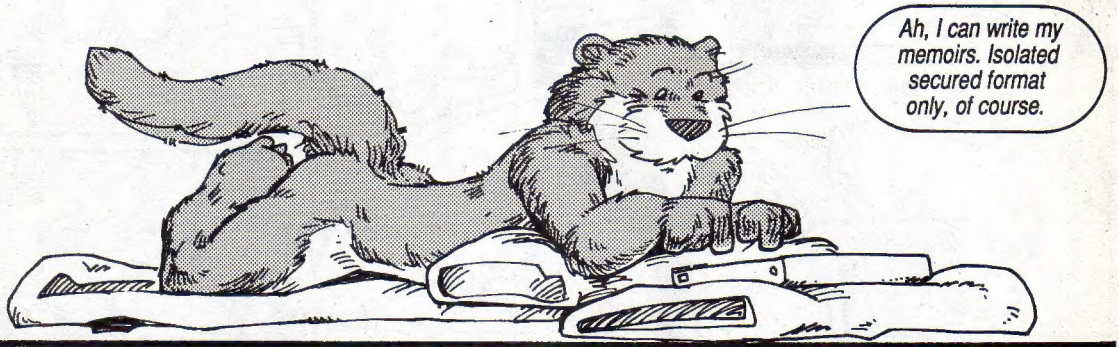

Well, it's finally happened. Never really thought about what it would be like to actually live with it all. And oddly enough, I think I like it.
EF258



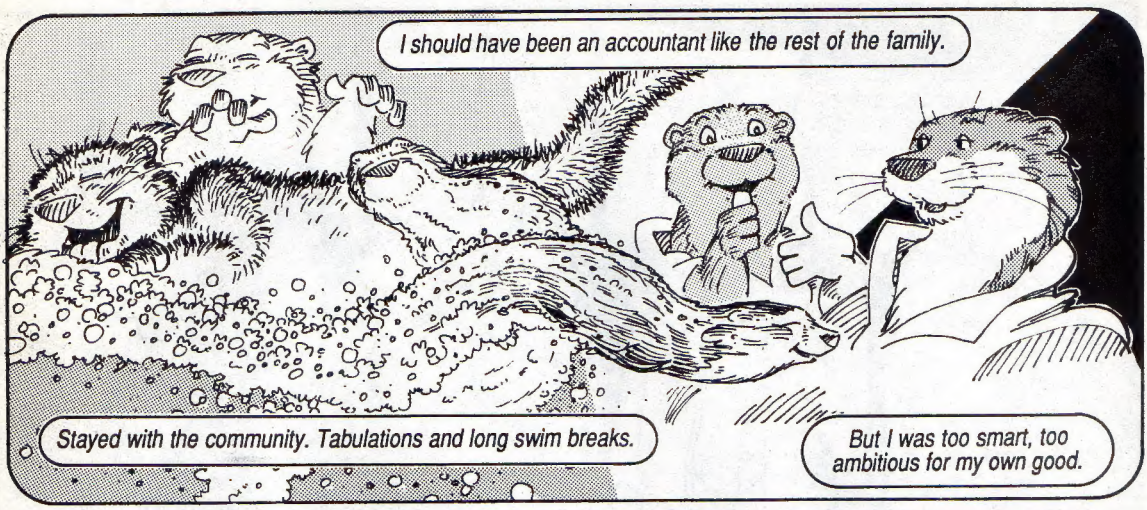
*Hon. - Honorable, a general respectful address


While I wait through quarantine, I might as well get caught up with my reading.

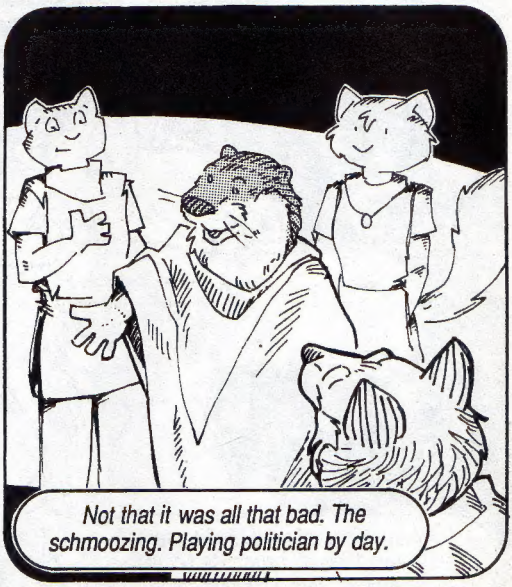

I HATE these med exams.


Ah, I can write my memoirs. Isolated secured format only, of course.

What will I do?
Personal survival is easy. To exist, to continue to live. Doing the Rim only makes it easier.
I can't openly challenge the corrupted net. And to attempt a covert action would only support counter-claims.
Net cannot act either, "outside its self-proscribed limits."
If only I could go back to the old days, when questions were answered by the evening meal and plans were tomorrow's breakfast.
EF260

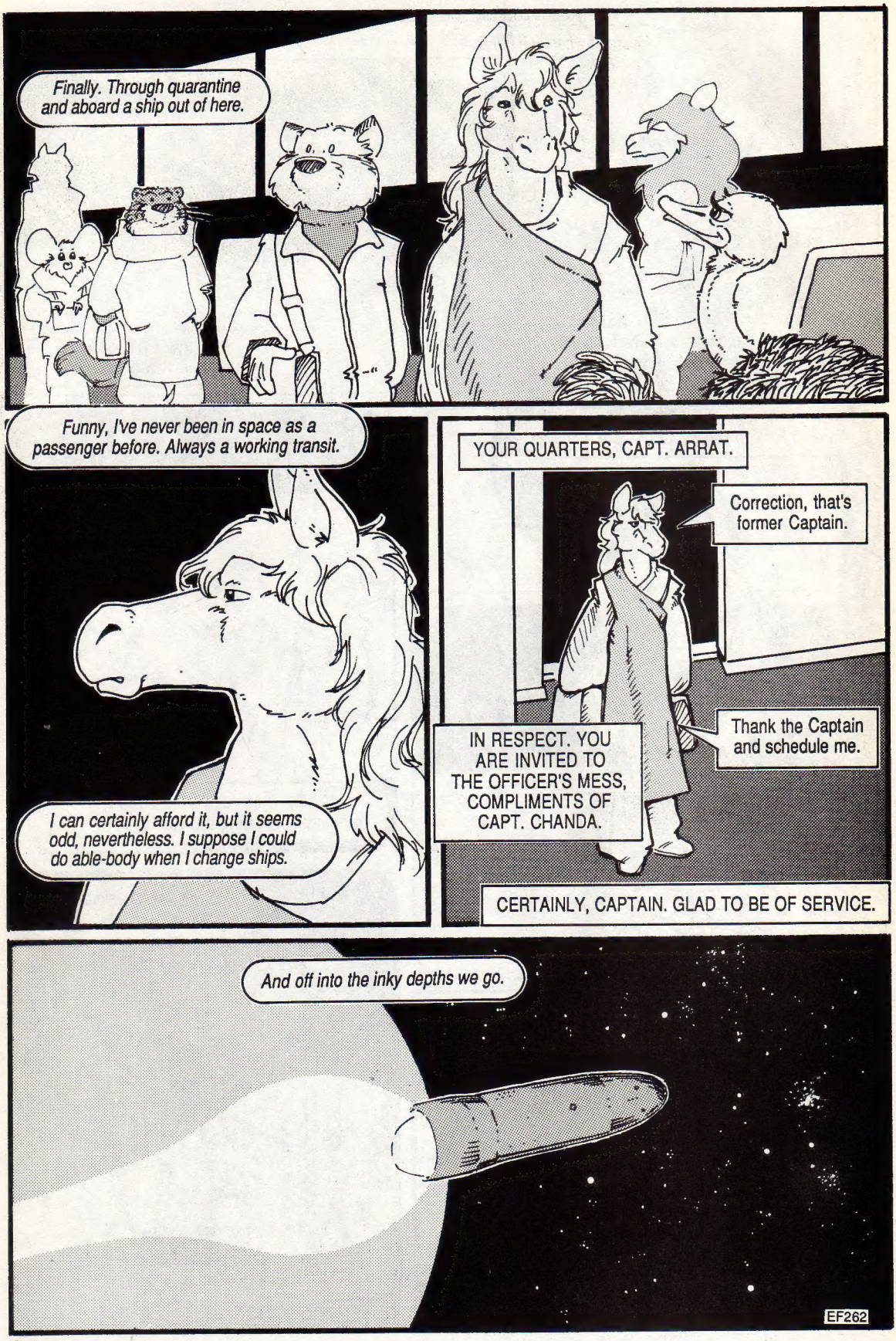

I should have been an accountant like the rest of the family.
Stayed with the community. Tabulations and long swim breaks.
But I was too smart, too ambitious for my own good.

ConFed Foreign service for me. Smart move.


Not that it was all that bad. The schmoozing. Playing politician by day.

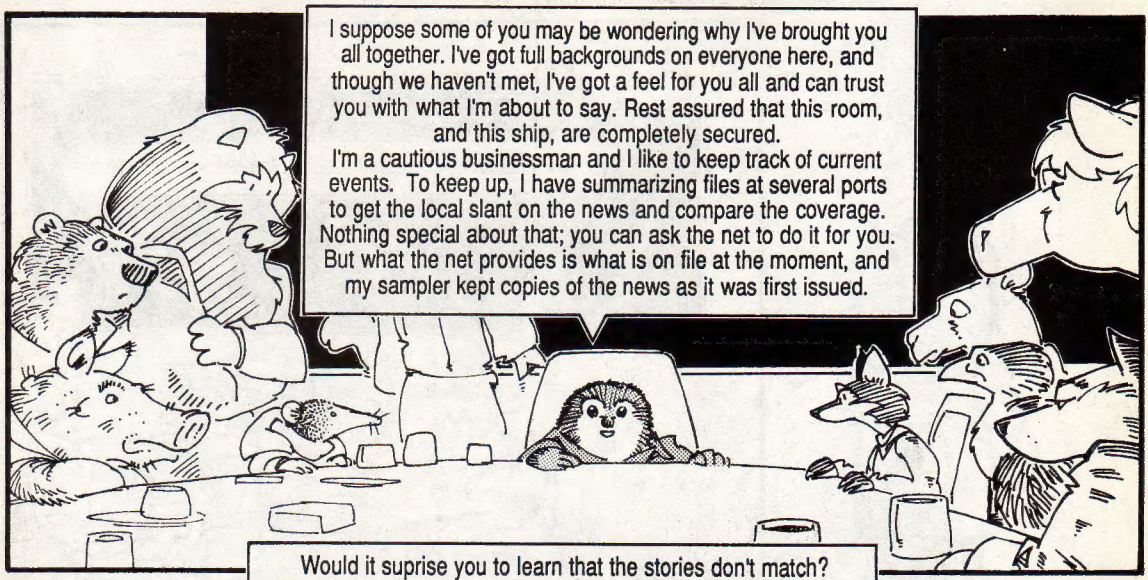
I'd be more upset about that part if I wasn't so damn good at it.

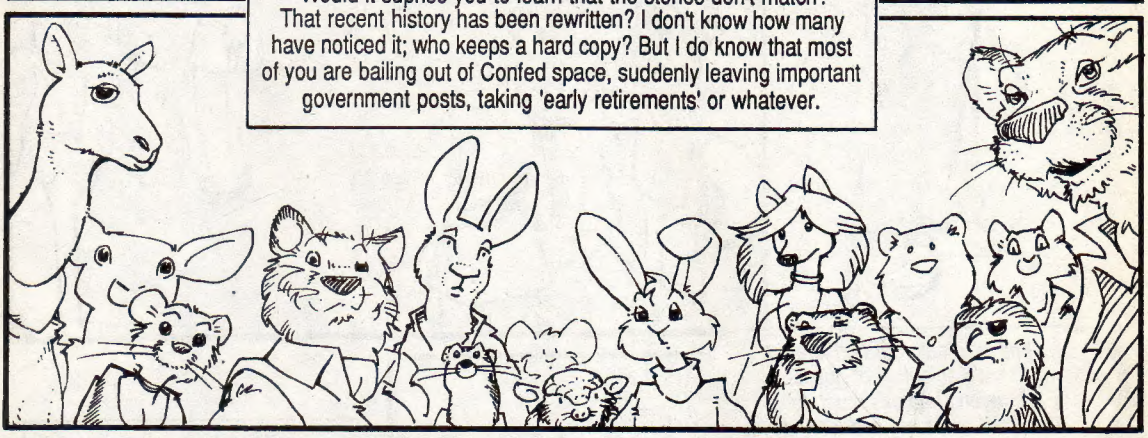
Doing the occasional bit of spook work after hours.
And now? Spooking might be all I can do.
EF261

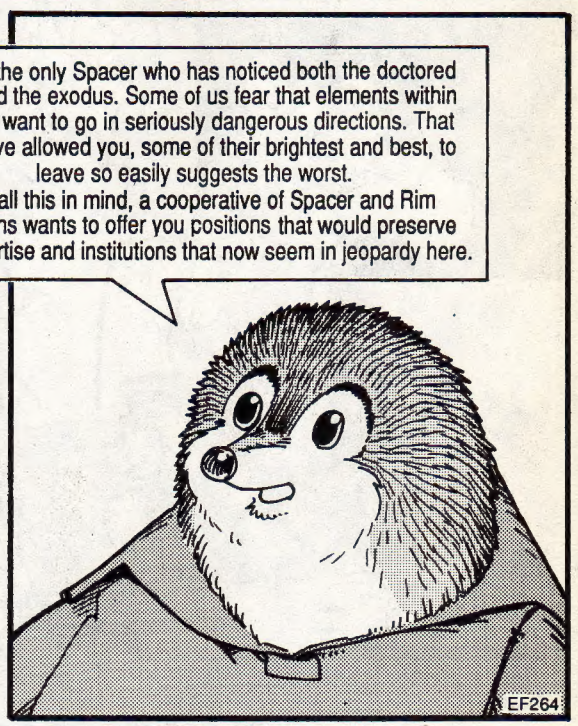

Finally. Through quarantine and aboard a ship out of here.
Funny, I've never been in space as a passenger before. Always a working transit.
I can certainly afford it, but it seems odd, nevertheless. I suppose I could do able-body when I change ships.
YOUR QUARTERS, CAPT. ARRAT.
Correction, that's former Captain.
Thank the Captain and schedule me.
IN RESPECT. YOU ARE INVITED TO THE OFFICER'S MESS, COMPLIMENTS OF CAPT. CHANDA.
CERTAINLY, CAPTAIN. GLAD TO BE OF SERVICE.
And off into the inky depths we go.
EF262

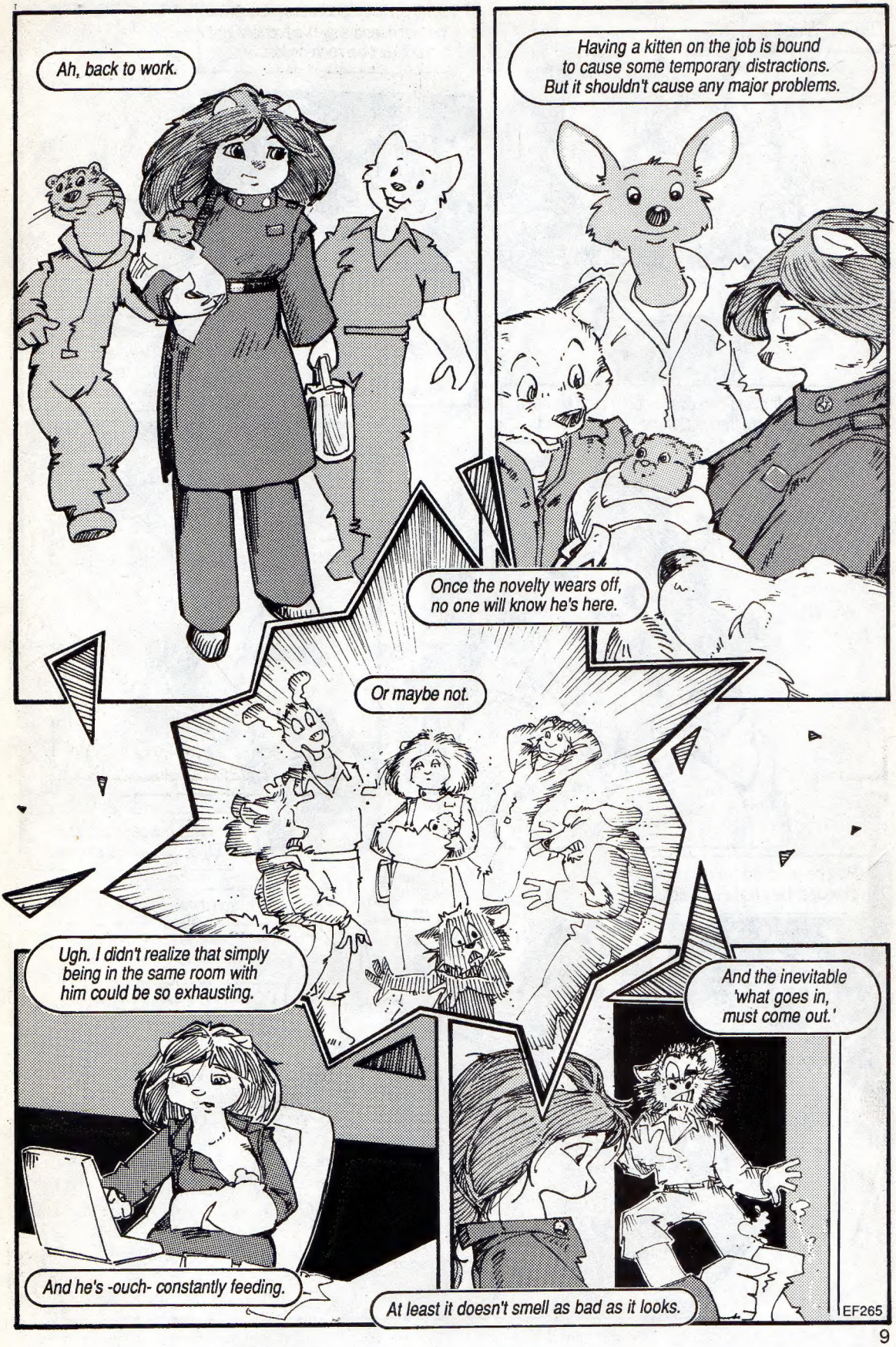
I wonder what kind of table this Capt. Chanda sets?
Oh. This looks more like a party. Interesting collection.
I have to say that I admire our host's selection of guests. I haven't had this much fun TALKING since my academy days.
Welcome everyone. I'm Buzi Chanda, Captain of the Wawah Tambuh. I hope you all have mingled and introduced yourselves and generally had a good time so far.

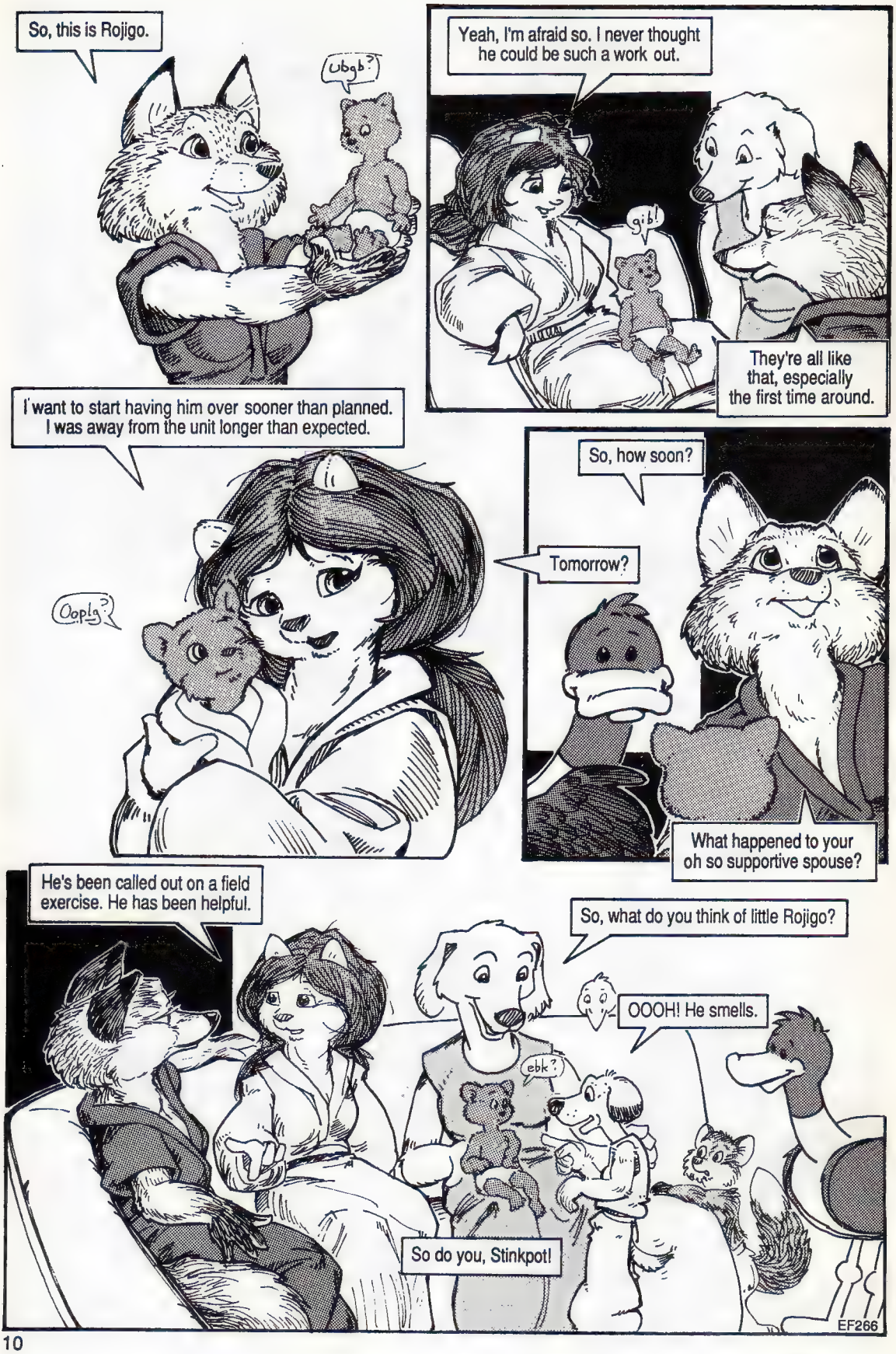
EF263

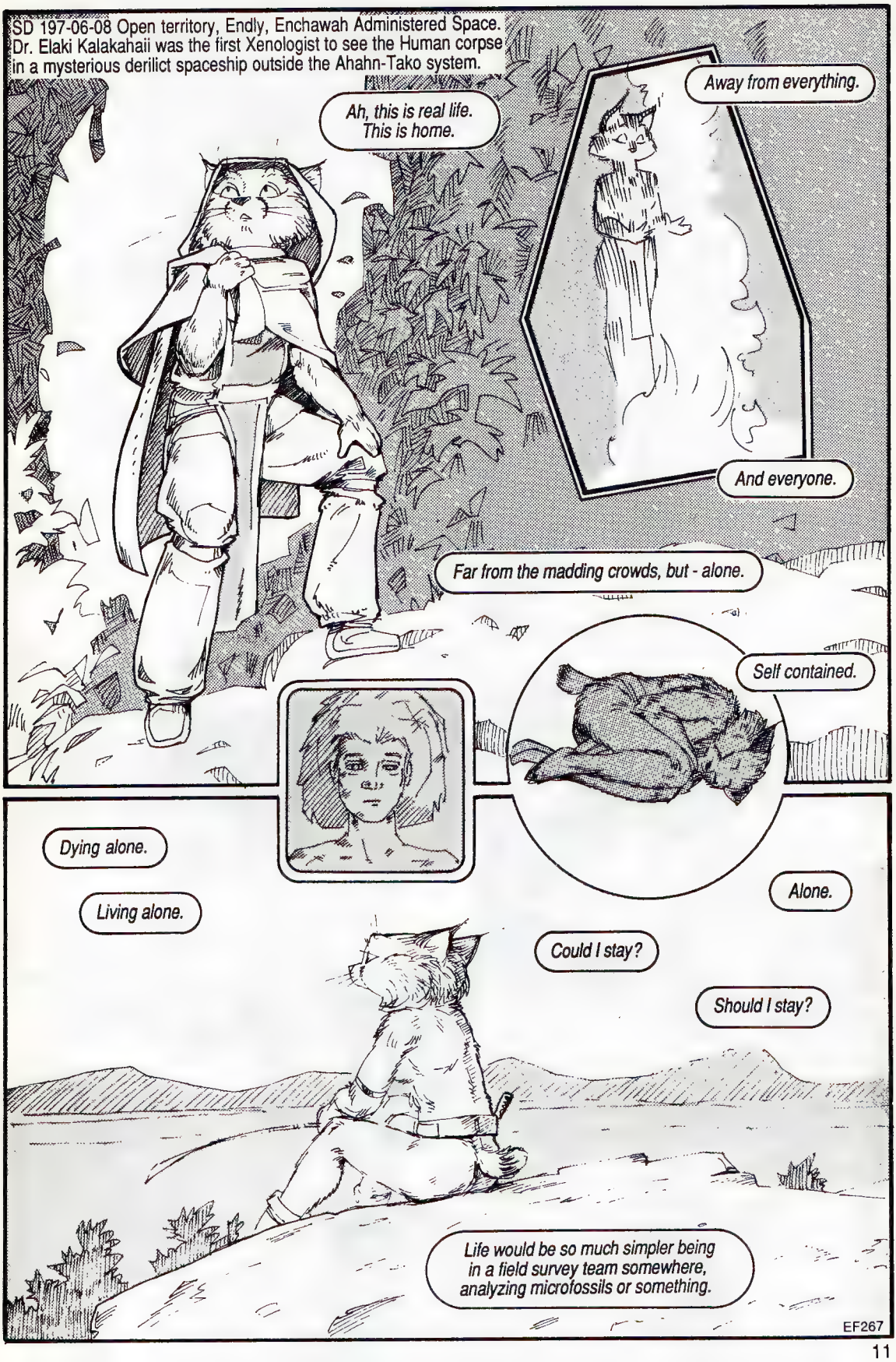

I suppose some of you may be wondering why I've brought you all together. I've got full backgrounds on everyone here, and though we haven't met, I've got a feel for you all and can trust you with what I'm about to say. Rest assured that this room, and this ship, are completely secured.
I'm a cautious businessman and I like to keep track of current events. To keep up, I have summarizing files at several ports to get the local slant on the news and compare the coverage. Nothing special about that; you can ask the net to do it for you. But what the net provides is what is on file at the moment, and my sampler kept copies of the news as it was first issued.

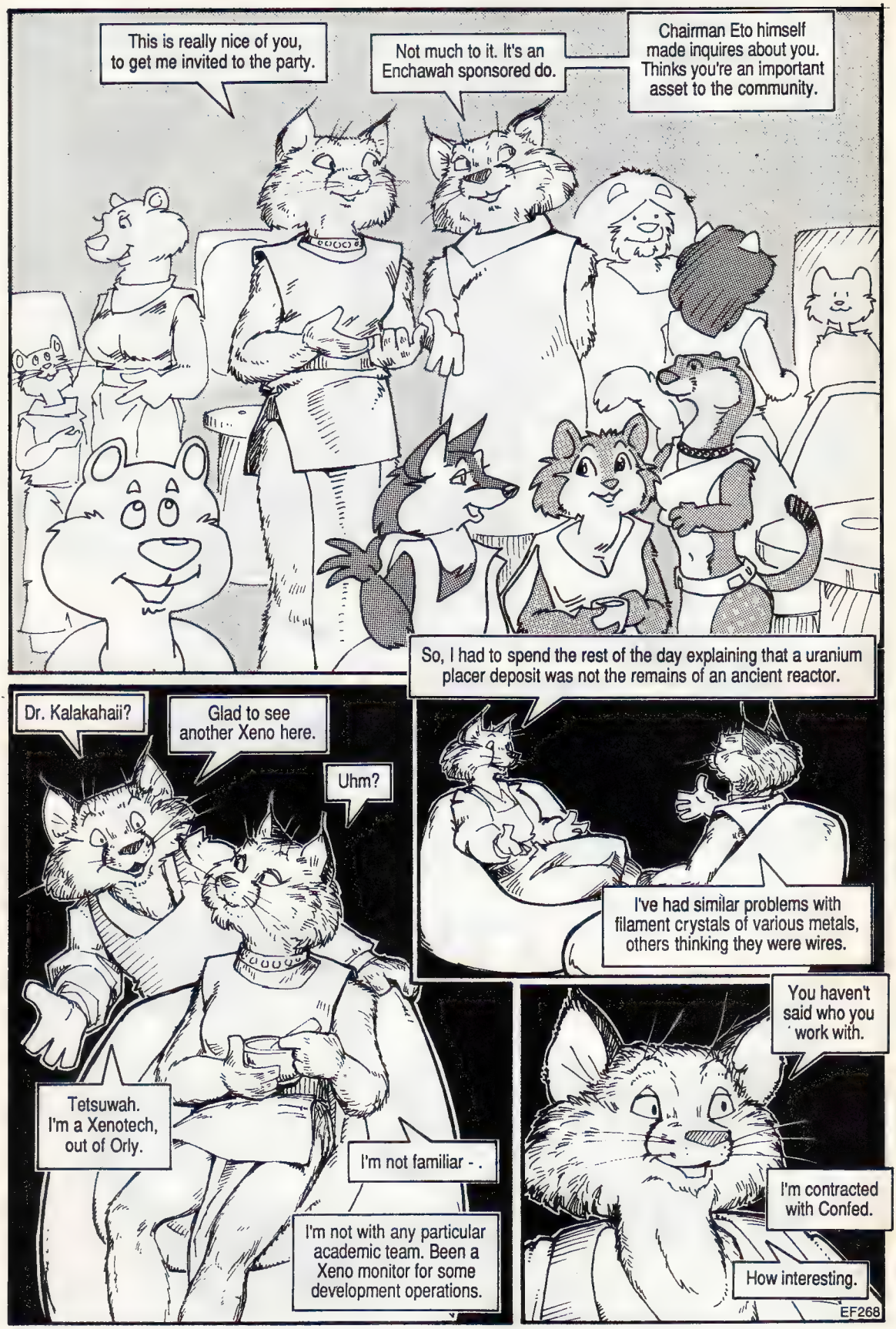

Would it suprise you to learn that the stories don't match? That recent history has been rewritten? I don't know how many have noticed it; who keeps a hard copy? But I do know that most of you are bailing out of Confed space, suddenly leaving important government posts, taking 'early retirements' or whatever.


I'm not the only Spacer who has noticed both the doctored data and the exodus. Some of us fear that elements within Confed want to go in seriously dangerous directions. That they have allowed you, some of their brightest and best, to leave so easily suggests the worst.
With all this in mind, a cooperative of Spacer and Rim concerns wants to offer you positions that would preserve the expertise and institutions that now seem in jeopardy here.
EF264

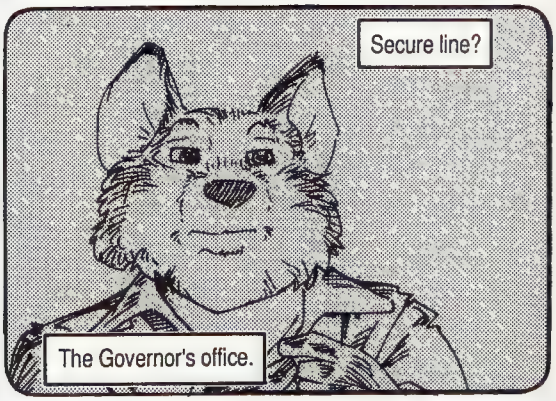

Ah, back to work.
Having a kitten on the job is bound to cause some temporary distractions. But it shouldn't cause any major problems.
Once the novelty wears off, no one will know he's here.
Or maybe not.
Ugh. I didn't realize that simply being in the same room with him could be so exhausting.
And the inevitable 'what goes in, must come out.'
And he's -ouch- constantly feeding.
At least it doesn't smell as bad as it looks.
EF265

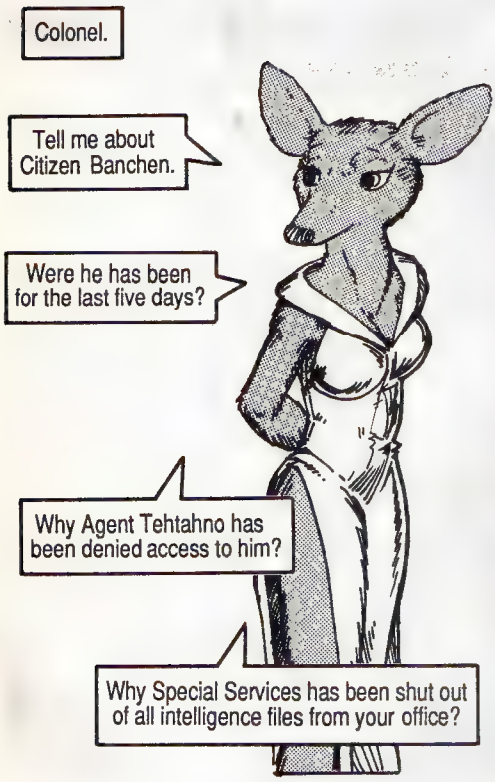

So, this is Rojigo.
Ubgb?
Yeah, I'm afraid so. I never thought he could be such a work out.
gib!
They're all like that, especially the first time around.
I want to start having him over sooner than planned. I was away from the unit longer than expected.
Oopig?
So, how soon?
Tomorrow?
What happened to your oh so supportive spouse?
He's been called out on a field exercise. He has been helpful.
So, what do you think of little Rojigo?
OOOH! He smells.
ebk?
So do you, Stinkpot!
EF266

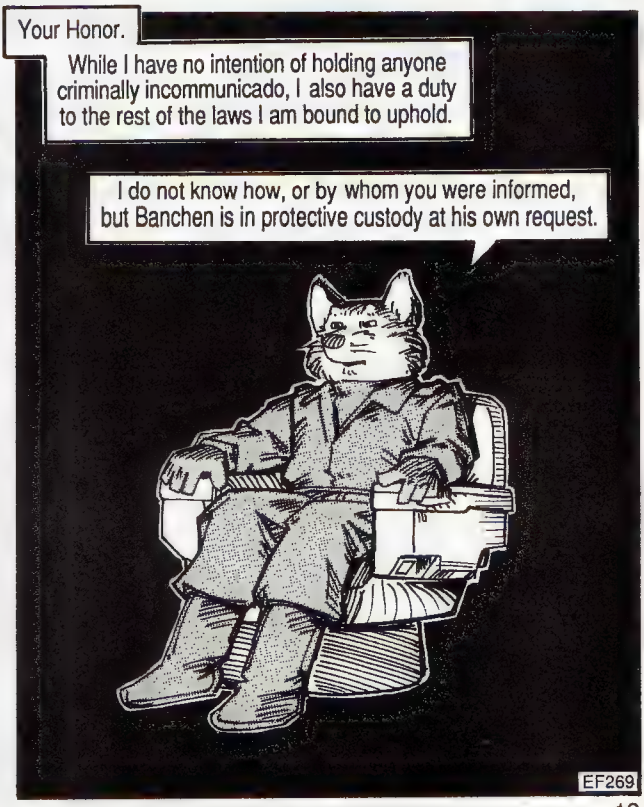

SD 197-06-08 Open territory, Endly, Enchawah Administered Space.
Dr. Elaki Kalakahaii was the first Xenologist to see the Human corpse in a mysterious derilict spaceship outside the Ahahn-Tako system.
Ah, this is real life. This is home.
Away from everything.
And everyone.
Far from the madding crowds, but - alone.
Self contained.
Dying alone.
Living alone.
Alone.
Could I stay?
Should I stay?
Life would be so much simpler being in a field survey team somewhere, analyzing microfossils or something.
EF267


This is really nice of you, to get me invited to the party.
Not much to it. It's an Enchawah sponsored do.
Chairman Eto himself made inquires about you. Thinks you're an important asset to the community.
So, I had to spend the rest of the day explaining that a uranium placer deposit was not the remains of an ancient reactor.
I've had similar problems with filament crystals of various metals, others thinking they were wires.
Dr. Kalakahaii?
Glad to see another Xeno here.
Uhm?
Tetsuwah. I'm a Xenotech, out of Orly.
I'm not familiar - .
I'm not with any particular academic team. Been a Xeno monitor for some development operations.
You haven't said who you work with.
I'm contracted with Confed.
How interesting.
EF268

SD 197-06-15 Homeguard Administration, Hicho, Ekosiak.







There is strong evidence that individuals have been abusing their office for criminal, if not treasonous, activities.

Without my intervention, Citizen Banchen would have likely suffered "deadly force restraint as a consequence of an escape attempt, resulting in terminal injury."

The organization to which Aito Kho belonged still -.

Aito Kho was the head of a conspiracy that died when he did. And don't think I don't know how ConFed was involved in that killing!

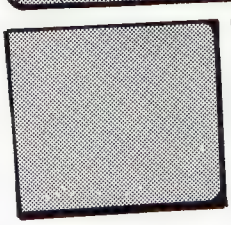
As I was about to say, the organization to which he belonged, still operates and appears to have members within the regional security apparatus.

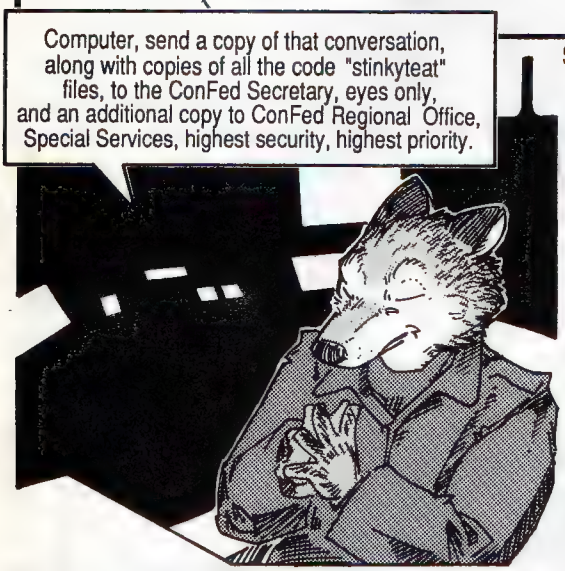
How dare you accuse me of cooperating with the likes of them!

Your Honor, if I had any evidence of your office's complicity in such activity, I would have called for an emergency national assembly to oversee your arrest and impeachment.

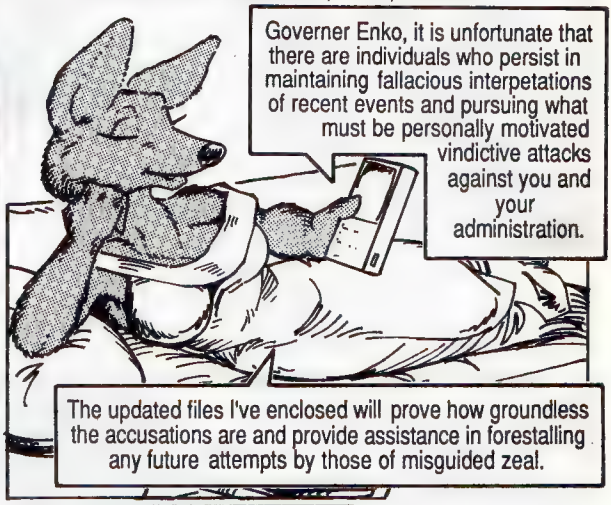
You wouldn't dare!

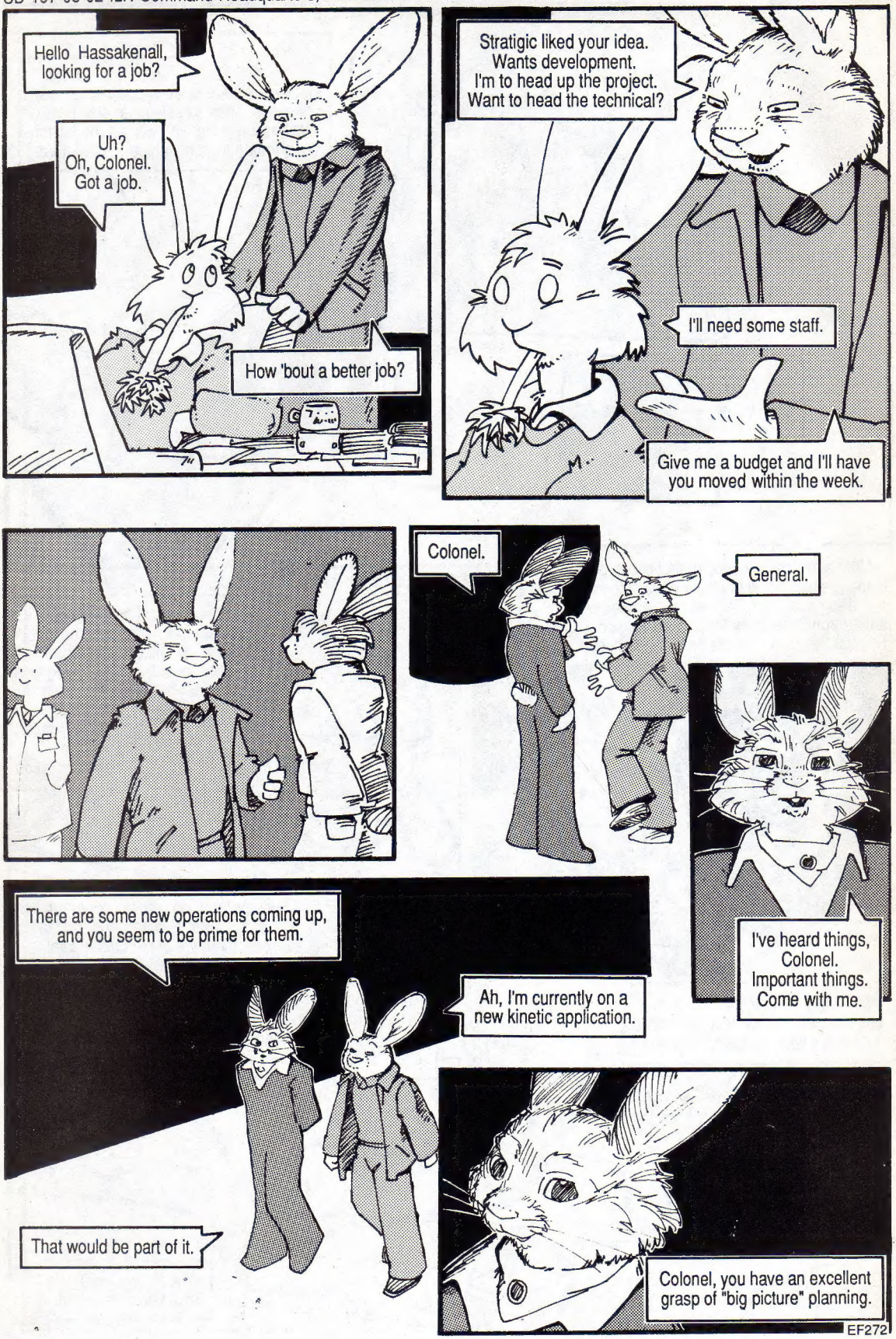
Of course not, as no evidence exists of your office's participation in any wrongdoing.

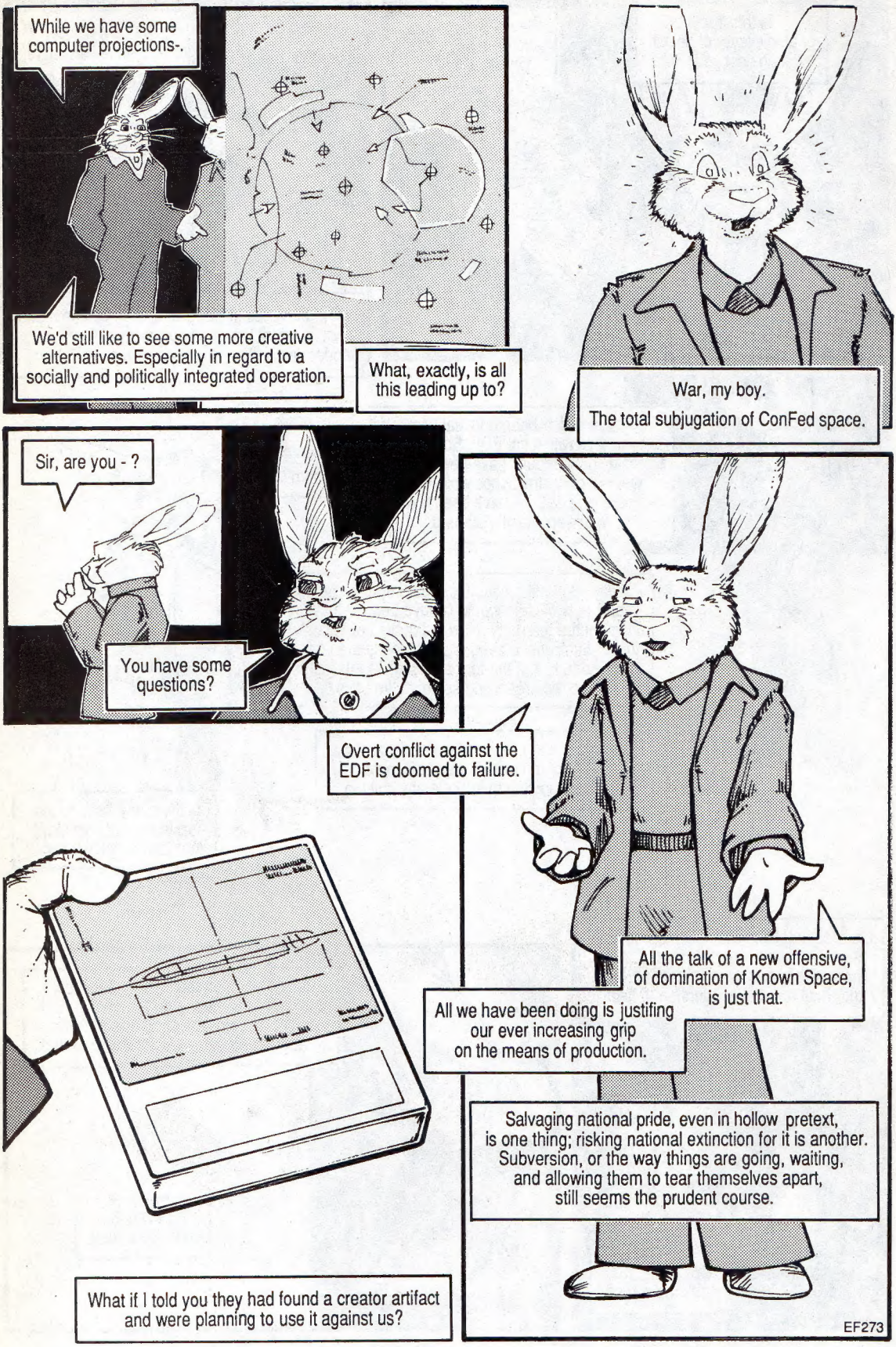


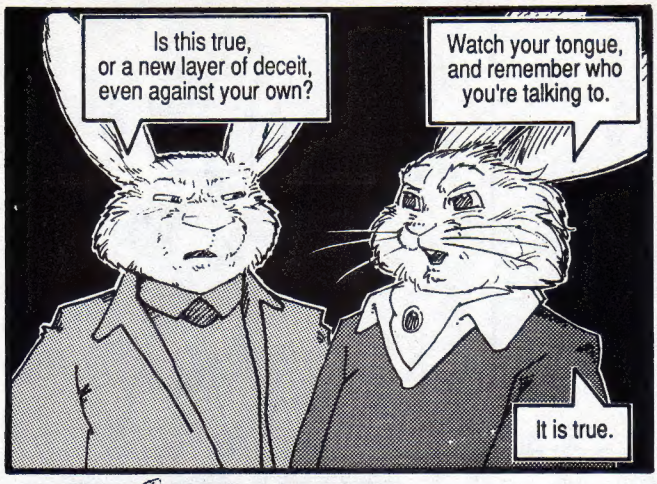


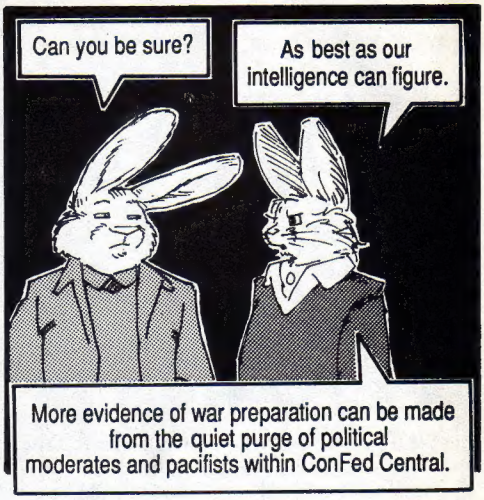
SD 197-06-32 Governors Residence, Hicho, Ekosiak

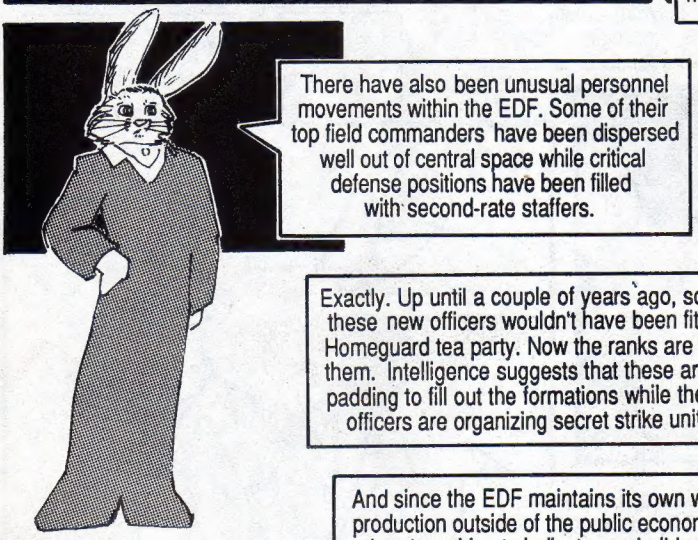


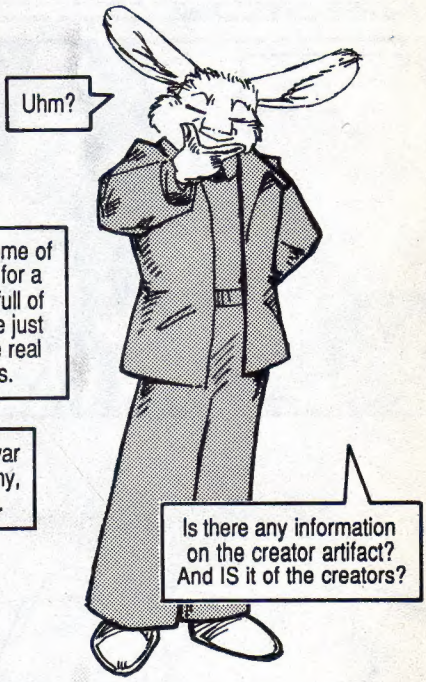

Hello Hassakenall, looking for a job?
Uh? Oh, Colonel. Got a job.
How 'bout a better job?
Stratigic liked your idea. Wants development. I'm to head up the project. Want to head the technical?
I'll need some staff.
Give me a budget and I'll have you moved within the week.
Colonel.
General.
I've heard things, Colonel. Important things. Come with me.
There are some new operations coming up, and you seem to be prime for them.
Ah, I'm currently on a new kinetic application.
That would be part of it.
Colonel, you have an excellent grasp of "big picture" planning.
EF272

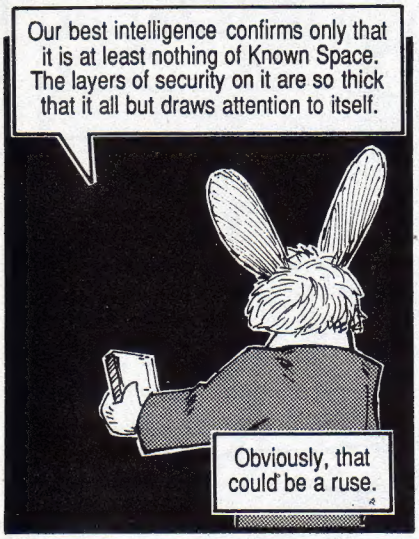

While we have some computer projections-.
We'd still like to see some more creative alternatives. Especially in regard to a socially and politically integrated operation.
What, exactly, is all this leading up to?
War, my boy.
The total subjugation of ConFed space.
Sir, are you - ?
You have some questions?
Overt conflict against the EDF is doomed to failure.
All the talk of a new offensive, of domination of Known Space, is just that.
All we have been doing is justifing our ever increasing grip on the means of production.
Salvaging national pride, even in hollow pretext, is one thing; risking national extinction for it is another. Subversion, or the way things are going, waiting, and allowing them to tear themselves apart, still seems the prudent course.
What if I told you they had found a creator artifact and were planning to use it against us?
EF273

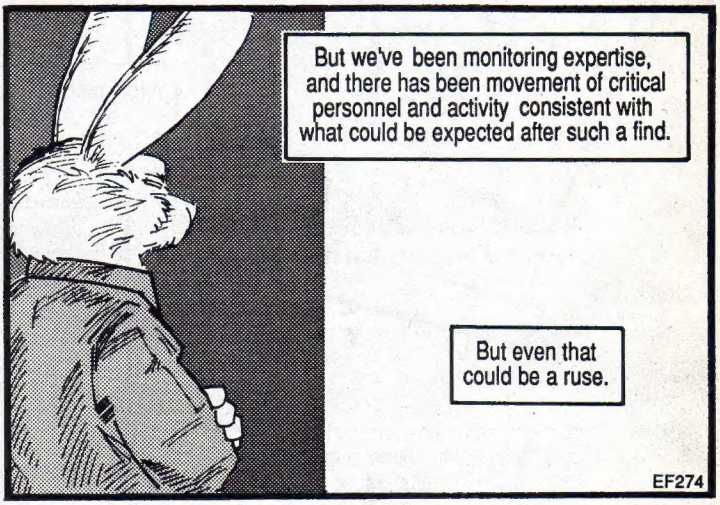

Is this true, or a new layer of deceit, even against your own?
Watch your tongue, and remember who you're talking to.
It is true.


Can you be sure?
As best as our intelligence can figure.
More evidence of war preparation can be made from the quiet purge of political moderates and pacifists within ConFed Central.


There have also been unusual personnel movements within the EDF. Some of their top field commanders have been dispersed well out of central space while critical defense positions have been filled with second-rate staffers.
Exactly. Up until a couple of years ago, some of these new officers wouldn't have been fit for a Homeguard tea party. Now the ranks are full of them. Intelligence suggests that these are just padding to fill out the formations while the real officers are organizing secret strike units.
And since the EDF maintains its own war production outside of the public economy, there's nothing to indicate any buildup.


Uhm?
Is there any information on the creator artifact? And IS it of the creators?


Our best intelligence confirms only that it is at least nothing of Known Space. The layers of security on it are so thick that it all but draws attention to itself.
Obviously, that could be a ruse.


But we've been monitoring expertise, and there has been movement of critical personnel and activity consistent with what could be expected after such a find.
But even that could be a ruse.
EF274

But command doesn't want to take the chance.

So your orders are to plan an overall political as well as strategic operation. The data will be available to you and your team as soon as its together and made secure.

A Creator artifact.

How to plan a pre-emtive campaign against an already numerically superiour force, armed with an unknown weapon?

A weapon of such potential that they are willing to negate every policy they hold dear to attack us.

A Creator artifact.

EF275